

How can I aid my shy child to be more social?

Shy children appear hesitant to make eye contact, enter social situations, and communicate with others. Shyness is often a combination of learned and inherited behavior. Although a normal response to potentially overwhelming situations, shyness can at times interfere with a child's development and inhibit their learning. When shyness is perceived to be affecting your child's social development and begins to overlap into other areas of maturation, it's recommended that parents follow strategies in addressing this behavior.

It's suggested that parents commend shy children for their social behavior when interacting with others. Some children are worried that they will not be accepted by others and therefore are fearful of engaging in play. If parents take the time to praise their positive behavior, their anxiety about these situations will decrease. Adults should not push children into social situations when they are resistant and should allow them to warm up to their environment slowly. By helping children become acquainted with their space, they will, in turn, feel more at ease and will begin to explore. Children often learn from observing others' actions. Parents are encouraged to model social interactions and can talk with their children about how to approach others. Remember, not all shyness is viewed as negative and can be a productive coping skill. Not every child wants to be the center of attention and should not be forced into situations they are not ready to navigate.